

Oral history interview with Sister Marilyn Herber

(Sister Vincent Marie), 4/23/08

Today is April 23, 2008, and this is an interview with Sister Marilyn Herber.

01 Family Background

Sister Marilyn, where and when were you born?

Well, let's see, this goes back a ways. I was born in Fort Wayne, Ind., uh, March 12, 1933, to Bertha and Knute Herber. Now the names are funny and in fact I have to make a little aside here. When I came to community and I thought it would be fun to have Sister Knute Bertha for my name and everybody laughed and the novice director says, "I don't think so!" But any rate, so I was born to Bertha and Knute Herber and I'm the third of, uh, three children: [There were seven children in the Herber family.] um, Audrey, my oldest sister, and then Helene and then I was born in 1933.

Are your siblings, are your siblings still living?

My siblings are still living except my oldest sister. She died at age 44, uh, breast cancer and she left seven children. And, uh, when the family gets together it's just fun because we still are a very close family. And all of her seven children still come together with, with the Herber side. She was an O'Neill — Audrey Ann O'Neill. And, uh, so, but her kids, er, all come. We just had a, a celebration in our family for my sister Helene's golden wedding anniversary. And so all those O'Neill children came with their wives and husbands and, uh, so that was just a great, a great time!

Helene is uh, next oldest. Her husband was a lawyer and they live here in Indianapolis and [have] four children and three grandchildren. [This interview was to originally take place at Sister Marilyn's home in Indianapolis, but she was recovering

from foot surgery in Health Care at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.] And I see them quite frequently since they live here in Indianapolis.

And then I come next, Marilyn, and, um, I don't know what you want me to say about myself yet, but, um, let, let me just go down the line.

Um, my sister Ann was next. She's married to Edmund Jarboe and they were married later in life so they have no children.

My sister Char [Charlotte] married Jack Knoerle and they have two children and the, uh, oldest one, Joe, is married to Vivian and they have three little, little children — and so they're darling. And then their, their daughter, Elizabeth, married John Barger and, uh, they lived just these past two years in Libya. They both work for the CIA and so, uh, they were sent to Libya for a year. [Sister Marilyn clarified during the editing process this should be two years.] He speaks Arabic, I believe, and so that's where they spent the last two years of their life.

Then there is my brother, Stan. Um, he was born in, well, we were all born in Fort Wayne [Indiana] except Ann. She was born in Valparaiso [Indiana]. We did a lot of moving around. I'll talk about that at another time. And, um, uh, uh, let's see where am I now? Ann, Char, Stan. Stan became a priest over at [in] the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and his first 10 years he was a teacher at the Latin School, uh, for high schools boys who were looking at priesthood. It was here in Indianapolis. And then he, uh, became a pastor and has been a pastor for the last umpteen years. He turned 70 in, uh, last October. So, he is moving along and thinking about retirement, but I think he's probably going to continue as a, uh, parish priest until he cannot go on any longer. He loves his parish, St. Gabriel's, out in Connersville [Indiana].

And then my, my youngest sister was born seven years later. As my mother said one time, she said, "Kay, you were the only one planned." So, at some point, my mother must have, in quotes, [Sister Marilyn motions with her hands] needed another baby, and so Kay came along seven years after Stan. And she has not married. She's just cute as can be, but, um, lives by herself and [is] just a great gal. She worked for Lilly Endowment for about 20 years and now she has just retired. So, all of my family now are retired, literally, except my brother, Stan, who is, uh, still up at [in] Connersville as a priest.

So tell me about your parents. What did your father do for a living?

Obviously your mother raised a lot of children.

My father was a railroad man. Uh, all, all our lives all we knew was dad worked for the railroad — Pennsylvania Railroad. He knew every train. He could listen to a train go by in Fort Wayne, Ind., and he could say, "That was the Spirit of St. Louis. That was the this, that was the that." Uh, he was called the claim agent. What he did was, when there was an accident on the railroad, he would be the man to go out and settle the claim with the persons involved in the accident. And then, of course, he was, uh, the advocate for the railroad, and, uh. So that, that was an exciting life for dad. But he also, um, got promotions as, uh, he, you know, uh, grew up in the railroad business as it were. And so we moved from Fort Wayne to Grand Rapids [Michigan] to Logansport [Indiana] to Indianapolis just because my dad would get a raise. And finally he became the district, uh, claim agent and so he had a whole territory.

So, we were, um, moving a lot, and, uh, but even when I think about our time with dad as a railroad man, even in the [Great] Depression, because Audrey was born in '29 — just before the Depression, Helene came along in '31, I came along in '33, Ann

'34, Char '36, Stan '37 and Kay '44. So most of us are Depression babies, but because dad had a good, steady job, we didn't have a lot of money but we always had enough. And so that was very important.

So my dad was, was a strong railroad man, born in Fort Wayne, um, German ancestry. His dad, of course, Frank Herber, his mother was Katie Schmidt and they were from Hessen Cassel, outside Fort Wayne. So that was a strong German family.

My mother was a Till, and, um, I think we say that she comes from an area, uh, that is her, her background area, would be Thill — T-h-i-l-l, uh, in the Luxembourg, Germany, uh, area of Germany or France or wherever. Um, she, I think when they came over, not her parents, but probably grandparents, they decided to change their names to T-i-l-l, Till, because that's the way it was pronounced in Luxembourg and people in America were calling them Thill. And so they dropped the "h" and so, uh, it was Bertha Marie Till. And we all thought, you know, with, with mother being named Bertha, you know, World War I, Big Bertha. And that became the big joke. And we thought, "How did you ever get the name Bertha?" And what was funny was, she said, "I had nine older brothers and my mom and dad said, 'OK, boys, what do you want to name the fir..., your little, your little sister?'" She was the only girl, and the, uh, the youngest of 10 children, and so she had nine older brothers, my mom was the youngest, and the boys named her Bertha Marie. So, we always, uh, got a kick out of that. So she was a farm girl. They lived outside [of Fort Wayne] on the Till Road. The road today still is named after her family. It was the Till Road, the Till family lived there and they had big farms.

And I don't know how dad met mom, but I think it was at a dance at Franke Park or something like that. And so, uh, she married a city boy and he married a country girl.

And they were married in 1928 and they built their first home. Uh, a new home. I can't believe that they could do it, but I suppose in 1928 things were still good, uh, before the Depression. And so they built a home in a brand new parish and they were, what do I want to say? Charter members of St. Jude Parish in Fort Wayne. So that's where we all went to school. And at one point in time, if you can believe this, my sister Audrey was in eighth grade at St. Jude's, Helene was in, let's see, maybe sixth, I was in fourth, Ann was in third and Char was in first. There were five little Herber girls at St. Jude School in Fort Wayne and my mother and probably with Aunt Sally made us all dress alike for the first day of school. And so some of us wore that same dress in hand-me-downs year after year after year. But it was, it was fun, it was fun. So that's my mom and dad. Mom was a, a homemaker. She never worked outside the home. Uh, dad, dad was the breadwinner. And I, I, I can't think of anything else other than the country girl and the city boy.

02 Role of Religion in Family

Tell me about the role of religion in your family. How important was it?

Well, I would have to say very important. When I, when I look at a lot of families, uh, maybe not in the neighborhood growing up, I don't know, but in our family, religion was very important. My mother was, was a very religious woman. She had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart. And so everyone of, every, our home in Fort Wayne, and all of our homes always had a picture of the Sacred Heart. And, it's, what's interesting is all of my sisters who have married have a picture of the Sacred Heart somewhere in their home. And, so that was a great devotion that my mother had and kind of instilled in all of us.

Then, um, we always went to Mass together. I'm talking about when we were little kids, now. We always went together, pil..., piled into the old blue Pontiac and went together as a family. We were always a couple of minutes late because all seven of us had to get into the bathroom — one bathroom — before we went to church. Dad always waited till the end to get into the bathroom and so by the time he got into the bathroom we were just a little bit late for church. So, I just remember that. Um, every Friday night when we lived in Fort Wayne mom and dad and all of us, again, piled into the blue Pontiac and went out to New Haven, right outside Fort Wayne, for the Sorrowful Mother Novena. And we had to stay in the car. They weren't going to haul all these kids into that church, uh, St. John's Church in New Haven. And, so, um, but we knew when it was almost over because they would open the doors — uh, maybe it was summer, I don't know — but this is what I remember. They would open the big doors of St. John's Church and we would run out of the car, stand outside the door and look in and see the beautiful altar with all the candles and the whole congregation was singing "Goodnight, Sweet Jesus." So, that was, that was an experience [laughs] of church for me!

So, Sunday Mass, um, New Haven for the Sorrowful Mother Novena which we didn't go to, but mom and dad did. Dad, uh, this is very interesting. We were a family who prayed the family rosary. Uh, this is, I don't know what cities we lived in when we prayed the family rosary, but, um, dad won't mind me saying this, there were man..., a long time, dad did not pray. He sat in the room. We all knelt around the couches. Dad read the paper. Mom prayed the rosary, we all knelt and we all, you know, prayed the whole rosary. And then, I remember, one day dad put down the paper and for the first time responded to all the Our Fathers and Hail Marys. And it was like, dad is finally

converted, you know, to the rosary. And so, that was kind of a, a remembrance for me, too, when dad prayed the rosary with the rest of us.

03 Childhood Image of God

Sister Marilyn what was your — as a child — what was your image of God?

Well, I guess my image of God for a long time was just what I saw in pictures. God was kind of this old man, long beard. And you know when I ask that of other people, a lot of people seem to have that same image. Um, and I think when I say old man, long beard I think those are the kinds of pictures I saw of God. So then that was my image of God.

I also remember, and I don't know whether it was in school or where, but we had this little, this little saying, uh, and I don't know whether it was to impress us with being good or what, but, it was a little phrase, "God sees me. God observes me." And it's like, you'd better watch out because God sees you and God observes you and God is everywhere. So, I don't remember God being this awful person, but that God was just God. And I prayed to God. And so my image isn't terribly strong, other than God is God. And I prayed to God. I, you know, we prayed the Our Father. We prayed Bless Us, O Lord at the meals. Um, you know, we prayed the rosary. We, we thought of God.

I don't think I thought so much of Trinity. Holy Spirit — I don't know where God the Holy Spirit was in my life in my early years. Jesus, of course, was always there, and especially when I started school and began to, uh, prepare for my first Holy Communion. So then Jesus became very important in my life. And Jesus was always, well, the baby Jesus, of course, but Jesus was the young man of Nazareth, or the young man of Galilee or, or the young man who was now dying, you know, on the cross for us. So, I have good

images of Jesus. And I, I think that was most of my life. So, but the Spirit never became, at least as a child, not much more than a dove, um, an image of fire because those are the images we would read about in the Scriptures. I received my confirmation in second [Sister Marilyn clarified during the editing process that this should have been third grade.] grade and I know we were going to get a special gifts of the Spirit, but who was the Spirit, what was the Spirit, how was the Spirit one of the, part of the Trinity, I, I don't, I don't have too much of a sense of that as a child — other than it was good [small laugh]. So.

04 First Communion Memories

You mentioned your First Communion. Do you, do you remember that day?

Yes.

What was that day like?

Well, first of all, um, what we wore to church or to play or to school was always important in our family. We were always dressed well. Mother made our clothes. And so my First Communion dress was very special And it was taffeta and we had the veil. We all wore at St. Jude's, we all wore the same little veil with some lily of the valley on either side and a little headband, you know, and that whole thing. So I remember being dressed in my First Communion dress. And I — this is funny because it kind of sounds like clothes, but I have to do the clothes thing before I get to the religious part. And we had to have a little purse so that we could carry a hanky. And my mother bought me a lace handkerchief. It must have had two inches of lace around and only a small three-inch square piece of linen. And then mother bought me a little, uh, satin purse that had a clasp. And I took it to show it to our teacher and, uh, she said, "Oh, Marilyn, you can't have that

because it makes a noise when you open and close it." So I had to take it back home and mother then made me a little satin purse with lily of the valley on it and it had drawstrings. So I remember that very distinctly. And then it just hung on my arm and all it had in it was my little lace handkerchief.

So then, course this is St. Jude's, and we must have been 60 kids in that class, cause we were big classes, and, um, I don't remember so much about how it felt on that day other than be careful not to drink any water. And I remember, you know, the water fountains in the school and every place were covered over so we wouldn't take a sip of water and not, not be able to make our First Communion. But what helps me remember that, my Uncle Mel, my dad's brother, had a movie camera, back in the [19]30s and early '40s and I guess forever, I don't know, Uncle Mel always had a camera. But everyone of our family, my family, beginning with Audrey, Helene, now it's Marilyn and then his [Uncle Mel's] children, he came and took live pictures of our First Communion day. And so, the last time I looked at them was only about three weeks ago when we, when my brother, Stan, gave us a video of all of those pictures that Uncle Mel made. So it would be Christmases and First Communions of our growing up years. [Bells toll in the background.] So that was very special. So I saw myself walking out of church, hands clasped, and then we moved and formed a big, uh, class picture. And then, of course, I have kept that most of my years. So, the day was special.

And I remember, since it was May, and whoever got to, whoever made First Communion in a particular year in our family got to crown the Blessed Mother. That was another thing we just did in our home. If you were old enough to have a formal gown, like Audrey or Helene, maybe they had a formal or something, and so at least that year, I

got to crown the Blessed Mother in our home because I had made my First Communion. And all the rest of my sisters and my little brother, they would dress up and then we would sing the songs and giggle through most it. But we did put a crown [small laugh] on Mary's head. And this was part of, um, the religious atmosphere of our home in those early years, of the '30s and the '40s.

05 Early Education

What sisters were you taught by?

In Fort Wayne, of course, I was taught by the Sisters of Providence, grades one, two, three and four. Uh, my first grade was Sister Esther Marie [Sullivan, died 1995]; second grade Sister St. Dorothy [Pierce, died 1972]; third grade Sister Ann Xavier [Hau], who lives over here in Lourdes [Hall], where I'm staying right now; and then my fourth grade was Sister Joseph [Yangulov, left the Congregation 1952]. And I think she left community, um, at some point. And then we moved to Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1943, when I was out of fourth grade. And there I attended St. Stephen's School and I was there for fifth grade, sixth grade and part of seventh and we had the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich. Then we moved, my dad was transferred again, and we moved to Logansport, Ind. That was a small town, but it was a railroad town. And we moved to St. Vincent Parish. I was in second half of seventh grade, all of eighth grade and first and second year of high school, public high school — there was no Catholic high school in Logansport. But at St. Vincent's I was taught by Holy Cross Sisters from, uh, Notre Dame, uh, St. Mary's up at Notre Dame, Ind.

And then, in 1949, we moved to Indianapolis and I was a junior in high school, um, and dad had moved ahead of time, moved six months before the rest of us and when

he went to Indianapolis he talked to some different railroad men and he said, "I have all these girls and one boy and where would you suggest we live in Indianapolis?" This is 1949. And whoever he talked to said, "Move into St. Joan of Arc Parish and send your girls to St. Agnes Academy. And of course, St. Agnes Academy was Sisters of Providence and St. Joan of Arc in Indianapolis was Sisters of Providence. So I started out with Sisters of Providence and I ended up with Sisters of Providence.

06 View of Sisters

What was your view of sisters?

Well, we loved them. There was always a good rapport. Uh, St. Jude's, Fort Wayne, I mean those nuns were really in with us. In fact, we had one bicycle in our family, just one. Probably that's all we could afford. But we know [knew] that the sisters asked different kids if they could borrow our bicycles at a certain point every year. And it had to have been Foundation Day [Oct. 22] because the nuns had a picnic in the woods across from St. Jude's. And we lived very near the school. We lived on Leroy Drive. And, um, the woods, we, we always kind of, um, detoured through the woods on our way to school. And, uh, we know [knew] the nuns had a great day in there and so we would give them our bicycle to ride. And so we just had great, great fun with the nuns. Uh, and, and by, by the time you got to Indian..., uh, Grand Rapids, see now I'm older and I just remember all of my teachers were very good teachers and were very kind. I loved all my teachers. At that [the] point I came to community I had to think long and hard, you know, which one of the three orders, who taught me, um, would I most want to be? And, uh, so, but any rate [way], I ended up Sisters of Providence.

I did also go, I have to admit, I did also go one semester at Marian College [Indianapolis] after St. Agnes, just, uh, because I wanted to get some schooling in before I entered the Sisters of Providence Feb. 2, 1952. So I did go to Marian and have the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg [Indiana] for that one semester of college. And of course they were lovely sisters also.

07 Why the Sisters of Providence?

So what ultimately made your decision to enter the Sisters of Providence?

Well, I began with them, in a sense I ended with them. Uh, the sisters at St. Agnes, uh, were very kind and, and really kind of approached me about becoming a sister and I would have to say way back in, in second grade, Sister St. Dorothy, she's the one who really got me thinking, my second grade teacher. One day my mother thought we were going to have a free day. Monsignor Dapp, the pastor, frequently gave free days. And so this one day, mother sent us to school and we didn't bring our lunch. And I guess we brought our lunch. I don't know, we lived close. But any rate, I didn't have lunch, or maybe I forgot it, I can't remember. But sister — I, I was crying in my seat, second grade. And Sister St. Dorothy came over to me and cupped my face in her hands and she said, "Marilyn, would you like to go home for lunch?" And I said, "Oh, yes." And so she let me go home for lunch. Probably called my mother and said I was going to come home for lunch. And I thought what a lovely thing to do, and I would like to be like her. And so Sister St. Dorothy was always a very much favorite of mine because she was so loving. And I'll never forget that. And somehow that's stayed with me. And I think from that time on I was going to be a sister.

And I think probably because I had them four years and then two years in high school, they were the sisters I most identified with. And the other sisters I loved, too, but for whatever reasons, uh, I just, there was just something about the Sisters of Providence, and I suppose today we would call it charism, but they were good teachers. They were highly educated. I was very motivated to studying, uh, learning. We were all good students. We studied hard. We always studied around the dining room table. And the Sisters of Providence always impressed me as being good teachers. That was like a specialty even before I knew them. And, uh, that is before I knew them well.

And when I was in first or second grade we had a little blue book called *Anne-Thérèse* and it was the story of Anne-Thérèse Guerin, Mother Theodore. And there was another one called *Irma*, uh, Sister Irma Le Fer [Sister St. Francis Xavier Le Fer]. And, uh, so any rate, we grew up with those stories. And so, I think the Sisters of Providence became part of me, uh, without my even knowing it, so that when I made a choice I remember, uh, I, that's, that's who I said.

My grandmother, who was very German and knew only the German sisters of Notre Dame and St. Mary's, German church in Fort Wayne, she thought I should have been a Notre Dame sister, the German group. And I said, "No, no, I'm going to become a Sister of Providence. They're French." I don't know where Luxembourg is but maybe there is a little French in the background of my mother, I don't know! But any rate, uh, that's, that's, that's what I chose, mainly because of the people I knew, but also their emphasis on quality education.

So you shared with me your grandmother's take on your entering the Sisters of Providence, what about the rest of your family, when you made that decision to enter religious life?

The first time [pause, clears throat]. When I first told my mother, uh, she was ironing. And at that time I think I was a little younger because I mentioned becoming a missionary. Well, she almost dropped the iron. She said, "Marilyn, you would never make it in a missionary land. You can't stand bugs, you can't stand dirt. You better think about something else." And, so, that's when [laughs] I decided I'm not going to become a Maryknoll. And that's when the Sisters of Providence definitely grew. And I don't think that lasted too long anyway, the Maryknoll. I think that was kind of a romantic whatever for a very short time. But, uh, but she said, "Well." Then I think I kind of let that go.

But later when I was getting more and more serious and I was getting older into high school, I remember, uh, dad was taking me somewhere and that was going to be the day I was going to tell dad that after high school I was going to enter the Sisters of Providence. And dad said something that probably was a main reason for my entering religious life. Dad said, "Oh, Marilyn, your mother and I have been praying all our lives that God would invite, give a vocation to one of our girls to become a sister." And so I said, "Well, I guess it's me, dad." You know, and, so, my mom and dad were very pleased.

And then my sisters got excited. You know the day I entered everybody got into the car — I don't think it was the old blue Pontiac anymore [laughs]. I'm sure it was something else by then. But, uh, and everybody came down, and, uh, you know, wished me well and then I entered the postulancy. And I remember what was fun with all my

sisters because some of us were, were tall and we could kind of interchange clothes. And so I remember thinking, "Oh, nobody will ever want this dress." And they said, "Mar, yeah, Marilyn, why don't you wear that because we won't want that dress after you leave." So I remember that [laughs]. So everybody was excited.

And all my relatives, I can't, I don't know of anybody who wasn't excited in my family about, um, my becoming a sister. And, uh, but I know later on when I thought, "Well, you know, maybe one of my younger sisters would join." And, and then one of them did say, this is much, much later, "No, Marilyn, I think one in the family is enough." So [laughs] that was kind of the response. And it had nothing to do with we like sisters or we don't like sisters. It was like, Marilyn, I think you're enough. That's, that's enough. We're, we're, we're going to be about many other things, so. But that was fun. That was one of our good jokes in the family.

08 Entrance into the Congregation

So tell me about that day that you entered. February, correct?

Feb. 2, 1952.

You said your family was with you. Um, once they left was there homesickness on your part?

I was never one to get homesick. Now, if this, if I were Ann, my sister Ann, she would be home in two weeks [clears throat] because she couldn't even stay at camp overnight, I don't think. And Kay ran home from kindergarten I think or something like that. She couldn't be away from home. No, that, but, but, but, what made it very good for me [pause], my mother wrote me every week, every week telling me all the news of the day. My mother only had a, I think, a freshman in high school education, but she

wrote wonderful letters. And, uh, so that helped me just not be homesick. And every holiday, feast day, whatever the people at home got, I got — an Easter basket, every year of my life I got an Easter basket. We still hunt for Easter baskets [eggs] in our, in our family.

But any rate, so, I, I [clears throat] remember being with my family for, you know, a nice period of time, showed them around the grounds, and then it came time for them to leave. I don't even remember saying goodbye other than just going, you know, from each to each. And, uh, and I'm sure it was tearful. I, they may have been sadder than I was. It was, it was a journey, a new journey for me and I was excited. I, I know I was excited. Um, but I remember going in and my guardian angel — we had a guardian angel to take care of us and she was a novice. Uh, I had Sister Catherine Doherty [died 1991] and she helped dress me in my — oh, no, mom and dad hadn't gone yet. I was, I had to be taken in. They were still outside because my guardian angel took me in and dressed me in my postulant uniform and then she took me down to Sister Marie Ambrose [McKenna, died 1993], who was the director of novices, and she put my cape on me, my postulant cape. And then we were taken back outside. And now I was a postulant. I almost get tears in my eyes now. I have no clue how I felt when I [voices breaks] went back out with black socks, black shoes, black skirt, black blouse, black cape. Nothing on my head yet, we didn't have black caps yet, that came later. And then it must have been, oh, I don't know what it was. But right now I don't think I said it like this before in, in a long time. So it's, it's really, um, kind of tear-jerker for me to say it like that. You know, how my family must have felt when I came — really separated now. Because back in those days, we would only get to go home once or twice, only either for the, the illness or

the death of our mother and father. Now they could come and visit us, but we would not be able to go home. Now I knew that, they knew that. But for me, it was like, oh, this romantic, heroic thing that I was going to do, you know. Whereas with my family, I think it was like, oh, you know, Marilyn's not going to be home for Christmas. I don't know what they thought. But, um, I wasn't thinking about that then. I was just ecstatic about what this whole new life was going to be about.

And I don't remember ever getting homesick. I know a lot of other novices did because we kept singing, having novenas to the Infant Jesus, and we didn't know why we were having all these novenas, but I, I think, it was, later I found out that it was making novenas so that these novices or postulants or whoever wouldn't leave. So they would have [laughs] the grace to stay, if that was, you know, where, where they really ought to be. And so we were making novenas all the time so there must have been a lot of homesick, uh, postulants and novices, that's all I can think of. But I don't think there was a, a novena made for me. I, I don't remember being homesick.

How many women entered with you?

Seventeen. We were 17. Two left almost immediately and then we were 15. By final vows we were 12, by [golden] jubilee we were six and we're still six.

09 First Vows

Tell me about first vows. What was that day like for you?

Well, you know, it was, it was the day we were preparing for, so, um, it would be, you know, we got through postulancy. Course we were taking college classes. We got through novitiate, the canonical year of intense prayer and study. And then we got through our, uh, second novitiate year. For me that was, uh, sophomore year of college.

And, ove..., I went to, uh, the Woods, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, and then at the end of that year was 1954, Aug. 15, uh, we would be taking our, our first vows.

But, uh, for my first vows, course I was going from the white veil to the black veil, and, uh, that was important because a very special person in my life, a sister, Sister Marie Virginia [Davis, died 1975], put my, I think it was she, put my black veil on, took my white veil off, put on my black veil and then we re-entered the church and took our first vows. And there we were, all up in the sanctuary, pronouncing our vows together and then, um, we, we put our hands on the Bible, each one, and then kissed the, the Bible, kissed the Scriptures and that, of course, made it a very solemn occasion. Uh, just to lay my hand on the Bible, kiss the Bible, pronounced my first vows as a Sister of Providence in this Congregation of the Sisters of Providence. You know, it's always *this* Congregation, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, poverty, chastity and obedience. And then it was just like, well, now, we're real nuns, you know, and, uh, after that then, of course, we prepared to go on mission.

So, it was, it was a glorious day, and I invited all kinds of people to this. So this was again a family thing and, uh, I, I'm sure all my family came down and probably cousins and, I don't know who all came. All I know is the grounds were full of people. And I just know that it was, again, a very special day.

Going from postulancy to novitiate was special because that was a definite move, uh, into the dress of the nun, even with the white veil. Um, when I became first professed, we got our chaplet. So that was when we got the long rosary bead, the chaplet. The cross was high and it wasn't lowered until I made final vows, then it hung low on the beads. So that was important. Got the black veil, got the beads, and, um, it was like now I'm a full-

fledged nun. And it was, it was glorious and we, you know you, I really felt like I was giving my, myself to God in a very special way pronouncing those vows, and, and they were going to mean something and I promised God, you know, this is how I would live my life. And we had studied, you know, about the vows all during these years — the two-and-a-half years, six months of postulancy and a year each of, uh, canonical novitiate and then, um, second novitiate. Or not second novitiate, it was, well, it was the second year of, of a novitiate here at the motherhouse, um. But any rate, so we were, we were well prepared for taking those vows. And, of course, you know, everything has evolved over the years.

10 Evolution of Her View of the Vows

And that's my question that I would like to ask is how has your view of the vows evolved from when you first started studying about them to today? And, and if you could through each one of the vows and express that change.

OK. Well, the, probably how I looked upon the vows in my first years, when I first took vows, would be, um, how I was taught about them. And so how I was taught about the vow of poverty was to be poor. That Marilyn, you're not going to have any money of your own. You're not going to carry any change. Uh, you're going to have a certain number of clothing. Uh, you're going to have a certain amount of whatever, but it was always very sparse. You could receive gifts from your family. You would get permission to keep them. My vow of poverty was kind of living poorly, not having much. And that [coughs] I think our [coughs] directors were trying to impress us so much with that, that that's kind of what I, um, became instilled with. This whole thing of just being poor. Being poor, not having much, depending on God for whatever — that's Providence.

OK? So that's, that's kind of where, where obedience was. Uh, poverty. Excuse me, poverty.

Chastity was pretty much now, you know, girls, when you take a vow of chastity you're not going to marry and have children. So, that was kind of the emphasis in the early days of study. And so when I took my first vows, it was, it was more or less giving up boyfriends and husband and children. And, and so that's kind of where it was, so your mind and your heart didn't move toward a lasting relationship. Um, you know you love your pupils, you love people you come in contact with, but your mind already knows you're not going to go seeking someone to marry, um, or allow someone to come into your life with thoughts of marriage. You, you're, you belong to God and so that, it, it became more a I'm made for God, I'm not going to marry. And my love goes to everybody else in a kind of a general way. So that was kind of my chastity in those days.

Obedience was pretty much, um, obey your superiors. And a big thing was, wherever you're sent, that's where you go. And those were dramatic days. My very first appointment or assignment was Sacred Heart, Terre Haute. Course I didn't know about Sacred Heart, Terre Haute, in those days. But it was a young house [the convent at that mission], I think six or seven of us were not even finally professed yet, good superior and maybe one older sister. So it was a young house, a neat place to go, but in my mind it was, "Oh, I wanted to go some place far. And I'm only going to Terre Haute!" So that was, that was the thought I got when Archbishop Schulte read my name — I was Sister Vincent Marie, in those days. And he said, "Sister Vincent Marie, Sacred Heart, Terre Haute." Well, I was sitting and so I knelt and accepted my obedience. That was an obedience. But in my heart it was like, "Oh, I didn't get to go very far." And I was ready

to go to China if they sent me, you know? But any rate, uh, but it, it ended up being wonderful. And, uh, so that, but that was kind of where my obedience was. Do as you're told. Um, yeah, do as you're told, don't get too proud.

There were times when I really hoped, when I was doing something over on the stage at the college [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College] and I was the postulant chosen to do that, and I thought, oh, it would be so nice if one of the superiors would have said, "You know, Sister Vincent Marie, you did a really nice job." And I remember asking this particular sister that I thought it would be so nice to hear a compliment, you know. And, um, later on, many years later when I was talking with this nun I said, "Why couldn't you have at least complimented me? I did a darn good job over there on the stage." And she said, "I didn't want you to be proud." And I said, "Oh, well, I guess that was a good reason then, but [laughs] I wouldn't buy it now." And so, uh, but that, so that was, that was kind of where I was at. That was, that was pretty much where, I don't know if others were there, you know, back in 1952, but those were my impressions.

Now as I grew in religious life, as Vatican II came along — um, as, see I was a teacher for my first 18 years, uh, 12 years in, uh, pretty much junior high/middle school and then six years high school. And, uh, and then I went into formation work in community. And so that was my first really gutsy time to study at Aquinas Institute out in Dubuque, Iowa. And it was not a degreed program, but it was my first real, um, after-college education that I really, uh, delved into theology, because it was after Vatican II. It was 1972. And so I had Scripture, you know, with [Father] Keisling and, and, oh, any, any, any Dominican theologian who taught me out there at Aquinas was a master. A master in his field and they were all filled with Vatican II theology. So I just erupted, uh,

in my, in my theology from when I entered in '52 to 1972, which is like 20 years. Uh, but see Vatican II happened in there, in, it ended in '65, so in '65 to '72 the community was also changing drastically. But, so when I studied formally then, oh, everything opened up. The vows opened up.

Uh, and then, of course, I was director of formation, um, uh, after I studied that year. We put a whole new program together. And so I was in formation then until 1980 with, uh, postulants one year and five years with novices — some of the most glorious years of my life. The women who were coming in the '70s were women with determination with, with great motivation, um, good people, oh, um, educated people, just wanting to give their hearts. And there I was, their director, and, oh, Lord, I had just, you know, gotten some good theology myself, you know? And, uh, so, uh, give me a question again so I can zero in.

I would just like to see how those, your, your views on those [vows] vows evolved.

Evolved, yes. [Bells toll in the background.] So, as I began to read more about the vows, because I'm teaching about the vows now with the, uh, young people coming to community, um, and having studied at Aquinas, now all of a sudden — and to this day, you know, which is years later, uh, golly, 28 years later, here I am 2008 — um, it, poverty is so much more now, um, identifying with the poor and the marginalized, putting myself in the hands of Providence, not caring, um, about all the things I could have but rather just what do I need. But I need much less now, and I don't have to have a lot of things now that I thought I had to have, you know, years ago. And that was a great time teaching novices about that whole thing of poverty of being willing to do and to go

and to be whatever you were called to, uh, by God. And so my poverty has, has become that, um, just that whole thing of dependence on God, that our dependence, uh — and I don't mean I'm good at this, I mean this is what I strive to be — um, that whole thing, the poor.

You know when I left, when I left being a novice directress, then I went into parish ministry at St. Mark's, pretty much an all-white parish on the south side of Indianapolis for 14 years. But I worked with adults and I saw the faith of the adult population in, in the pews. And then I went to an inner-city parish and became a parish life coordinator for 10 years, St. Andrew's, Indianapolis. And there I saw, mixed with many blacks, African Americans as well as white, and now I see poverty. And so, as my ministries move me along, then my view of poverty also moved me along. And I became changed by the people with whom I ministered — the novices, the people at St. Mark's, the people at St. Andrew's, the nuns with whom I lived, our General Chapters. You know, there were so many things that impacted that so that where we are today as a community, um, just says a lot about where we are, where I am hopefully, uh, with regard to my vow of poverty. And it's not about me anymore. It's about the world. How are we living in the world? How are we protecting and dealing with Mother Earth and ... ? Oh, it's, it's just a glorious time to be a nun. A glorious time to be alive, um, because there's just, there's, there's, there's always something new opening up.

There's one of the nuns in community, she's always been, you know, way ahead in everything as far as social justice. And I always tell her, "Oh, you've been on every bandwagon and I haven't even been on a bandwagon yet." She said, "Well, Marilyn, you do other things. Maybe you're not a bandwagon person [laughs]. You've got this or

you've got that. So, you know, we're all different." And I said, "Yeah, we're all different." And I thought, well, that's OK, you know, we're all different. So we all have our own bandwagons, I guess, but mine just aren't so terribly dramatic, I guess.

Chastity. Chastity, you know, I, uh, I really love people. Now it isn't so much, you know, staying clear or — I don't know that I ever stayed clear of people [laughs]. I don't think I'm that type. But, uh, you know, I really love people. But I also know that I have given my life to God, to Jesus. And, um, but I know my, my chastity is my way of loving. And God is first, Jesus is first and the Spirit has come alive in my life. And so the Spirit, the Trinity, the, the God is first, the Trinity. Uh, and people are second or not second, it's all part of one big thing. Um, but what I loved when I was in parish ministry, working with a lot of the men of the parish, oh, you know, we're just all one big happy family. But they know I'm a nun. And so it never became, you know, be afraid to hug or kiss or whatever you do when you greet people, you know, in a parish. It was always like, hey, Marilyn, just do what you do, be who you are. And, um, and people will know who you are. And they, they always have, and I presume they always will. Of course at 75 who would care? But any rate [laughs], you know, it's one of those things. I've just always, um, you know, gotten along very well with the men and women of the parish and that's part of my chastity just to love, to love them. And then, so, that, that has become my, my vow of chastity — just loving, uh, people, loving Earth, loving, just loving, um, trying to be a loving person. Uh, I get mad, I get angry. But trying to be a loving person that's kind of what I see as my, my goal.

Um, obedience. Obedience, you know, we've been taught differently. The books on obedience now are, are very different. We don't stress so much be obedient to a, a

particular superior. Although we know that's all part of our life. Our, our [general] chapters, when we make decisions — we are to obey those. We decide. It isn't like hand-me-downs. We all take part in the government of this Congregation. And that's part of our vow of obedience to be part of the, um, decision-making group, no matter what level we are on, we are part of the decision-making group. And when we make decisions, we're expected to, you know, act them out, live them.

Um, but the other part of obedience is just being open to the Spirit. Now, again, we don't separate that because the Spirit is alive in our [general] chapters, is alive in our superiors, is alive in each one of us, is alive in the parishes, alive in every person. So, it's, it's something just to listen to the Spirit in whatever persons we're with. And, uh, oh, I pick that up beautifully now when I go back to St. Andrew's. I've gone back every year. I've been away from there for four years. [Sister Marilyn ministered at St. Andrew Parish from 1994 to 2004.] The, uh, women have invited me back to be part of their Christ Renews His Parish weekends. And the women, and it's always, I don't know, the Spirit works it, it's always half white and half African American, however that happens. But their openness to the Spirit, um, [clears throat] is so beautiful that it, it just opens me up more and more to the Spirit. And they say the same thing about me. So we're all saying it about everybody, you know? And, uh, it's just one of those things. The Spirit is alive, but I'm convinced it isn't Marilyn hearing the Spirit, it's we hear the Spirit.

I really believe in the discernment of Spirits, that many voices, the Spirit speaks through many voices, but it's the Spirit that somehow comes out of that, that's the truth even though there's truth in all, all of it. The truth comes out somehow, and, uh, so that's what I believe about, about the Spirit. The Spirit speaks to me? Yes. But we talk with one

another about maybe a major decision in my life. It isn't just what I thought, but it's what, how did, how did this go with the rest of the sisters with whom I live or, uh, my Local Government Unit [LGU] with whom I associate? And, um, and so that's where the Spirit is. And, and the Holy Spirit listening, listening is the major piece of, uh, our, our vow of obedience.

Sister Marilyn, it's obvious that, um, you are very excited about the learning that has taken place over the years, not only concerning the vows, but just life in general. But getting to this point where you can express yourself as you just did, was it sometimes difficult, was it sometimes painful?

Oh, oh, yes. Um, painful. I've had my doubt about things. Um, I took some things — I don't really want to get into the specifics — but some things became bigger than life. Um, I spent too much time, maybe, with some worries, um, some fears that I've had in my life. But what's interesting is I've always believed that God likes me to be patient. I've always believed, all my life, that some day God would hear my prayer. And so through good superiors. [Sister] Marie Ambrose [McKenna, died 1993], my director of novices, [Sister] Rose, um, I was going to say one other, [Sister] Rose Dolores [Thuis, died 1969], one of my home superiors — those two stand out very specially. [Sister] Marie Ambrose and, uh, [Sister] Rose Dolores, they were such sensible women. And they could help me through some difficult questions.

And then because we've always been kind of expected or, especially when I became, I got, uh, involved in, uh, spiritual direction — the novices had spiritual directors, I was expected to have a spiritual director and from the 1970s until the present, I've had a spiritual director. And that is a great gift and to have someone with a clear

head, smart, holy, with a good mind, sensible, uh, as a spiritual director, um, that is God speaking to us and, uh, to me. And so I've been very fortunate to have good spiritual directors to help me through any of those difficult times.

Um, I know as a fact, uh, when I went into high school, there was a lot of studying involved there. You know, I was teaching high school, uh, right after I finally got my BA. And, uh, so I had not a lot extra, uh, as far as learning goes. I didn't have a master's yet, um, which certainly pre... would prepare me more. As soon as I got my master's I was out of high school and into formation work.

And then I, so I think there was a struggle for me just because of the way community went for me, and that was I needed some more learning in order to be a better teacher. I think I did well, you know? I taught English, history and religion. Um, and I felt good about it. I loved the kids. And the, you know, kids would come back and would say, "Oh, you were such a good this or that." And I probably don't hear from the ones that I wasn't a good this or that!

So, did I have hardships? Yes! But I always had the right people in my life who helped me through the hardships and helped me to find whatever it was I had to find where I was really, really happy and look forward to going to whatever I was doing, uh, look happy going every day to my ministry. So that's kind of where, where that was at.

11 View of the Trinity

Sister Marilyn, you've touched on this a little bit, but your view of the Trinity today. What is that view?

What is that to me?

Uhmmmm.

Well, um, I had to, I had to work through this when I first studied theology in 1972 [laughs]. And I even wrote about it in the little, a little, uh, article for the, uh, associates in our community, uh, on prayer. Today the Trinity, um, well, God ... I know we have a, a big thing about God being mother, father, uh, whoever. I can't get into all of that. Uh, it's fine. Wherever, wherever anybody wants to go with that, that's fine because I know whatever we call God it's limiting. And so, but Got for me will probably always be Father because I like Father God. I like Abba, uh, the name Jesus called his father, Abba. Um, I like Hosea, the, the Book of Hosea, where God is speaking and, um, you know, he did not know, but I [God] was the one who raised my child to my cheek and fed my child. So, God the Father will always, at least at this point in my life still, will be my Father. And I am child to that person of the Trinity. God will always be God and I will always be lesser than and so that relationship, you know, is kind of father and child

We're, uh, um, [Sister] Rose Dolores, uh, probably, um, influenced me there a bit because she said every night she we..., when she goes to bed, she hops into the lap of God the Father and goes to sleep. And I thought, "Oh, how lovely." And, you know, this is when she's quite an adult and older in her life and I thought, "Oh, what a beautiful image." And so I think maybe that has stuck with me. So that's where, that's where the Father is. The Father is very alive in my life.

Jesus will always be Jesus, my friend, um, the one I turn to, the one I pray to most, the one who is with me, um, the one I say, "Jesus, you got to take this over. I can't deal with it anymore. Uh, it's in your hands. Um, or you walk with me, I can't, I'm finished. It's in your hands. I did my best, now it's your's. Amen. Period. Out of sight."

And, so, uh, he has to take a lot from [laughs] me. But, he, he's a, he's a, he's a, you know, a young man of Nazareth, I suppose, uh, my friend, my, uh, my friend.

The Spirit, the spirit, um, is kind of just what fills me. You know, I don't, I don't see anybody or anything now with Spirit other than the Spirit of God, that love between Father and Son. I, I will always like that image, whatever that is, uh, and the Spirit that fills me, how God lives in me through the Spirit, um. And it ..., I don't care if there's an image or not, it's just there. I don't even want to call it air because it's, it's [small laugh] not air, it's not, it's just there filling me.

12 Volunteer Ministries

You are considered retired now, correct?

Yes.

But I notice that you volunteer at least in a couple of places.

Yes.

Could you share with me what, what that volunteering is all about?

Well, of course, I'm the type of person who, who wants to be doing something. Uh, but I knew that I couldn't, well, I've had some, some, uh, health problems with my legs and my feet. In fact I'm sitting here [in Lourdes Hall, third floor porch, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods] with having had some surgery on my foot. But, uh, my, my volunteer ministry, um, I love.

It's, it's, it's a couple of things that I chose to do, and one is working at Miracle Place [Indianapolis] with two of our sisters who run the place, literally, Sister Rita Ann Wade and Sister Barbara McClelland. And what I do there, I go in on Wednesdays and Thursday afternoons and I tutor the children. They come in after school and so I help

them with their homework, whether it's math or English or reading or geography or history or whatever it is. I've taught it all and, you know, in grade school. And these are children who are mainly first grade through eighth grade. So I tutor them and whoever they give me to tutor those are the children I tutor. We have fun. But they also know they've got to get their lessons done.

So the Hispanic children and the African American or Black children and then the whites of the neighborhood. So we're very multicultural and they all get along beautifully and that's the neat thing about this place. And so sometimes when I finish tutoring then I'm making a snack or I'm playing a game. "Sister Marilyn, will you play a game with me?" So, or, "Will you read a book to me?" Or, "Can I read a book to you?" Or, wer... we spend this time just being present to the children and so I love it. And as you get to know the children and their parents then, you know, you become more and more comfortable with them. And, uh, so I do that.

And, uh, and then one day a week, in the afternoon, I go over to a place called Abbie Hunt Bryce Home [Indianapolis]. And it's run by two women and it's, it's an outgrowth of the visiting home nurses. It's not run by the government per se, uh, but they do get Medicai..., Medicaid, uh, from these people. These people are poor. Some of them have lived under bridges. These are people who could not afford any other kind of a nursing home. So they can com..., come here to Abbie Hunt Bryce Home. It's called a home because we try to make it a home and not a hospice. But it's really a hospice. When they come, they come expecting to die within a year. So we get very close to these people.

But, so, what I do there is I visit with them, uh, they, they can have as many as 12, usually they try to have six men and six women in two different wings. Each person has his or her own bedroom, bathroom and closet. There are general dining rooms. They can walk the halls, they can go to the refrigerators, they can get a, they can do whatever they want. If they want a McDonald's in the middle of the night, somebody will go out and get them a McDonald's. Uh, because many of them can't, they don't, they don't want to eat during the day, they don't want to eat at a meal. But they're wide awake at 3 a.m. and they want a hamburger. So, uh, they are just lovingly cared for. So I will visit with them. I'll do their laundry. I will cook. I've made tuna fish salad I don't know how many times. I've made Jell-O, you know? Or I'll fix the meals that are already prepared ready to go. Or sometimes I, um, I sit at the, you know, if the lady who, who's at the desk to answer the phone or the door is not there, then I'll be kind of be the hostess, you know, there at the desk. And, uh, there's just all kinds of, of jobs to do — fold their laundry. You're just in and out of their rooms all the time. And there's, there, they run the place on volunteers. There [are] probably between 40 and 60 volunteers who work at that place.

And how long have you been volunteering there?

Probably about maybe two-and-a-half years.

So you've seen — you've lost individuals.

A lot of people come and go.

How difficult is that, Sister Marilyn?

Well, it depends on how close you get. Uh, you know, of course that's part of our, our, our, we have to have three very long, um, not interviews so much as just be... becoming ready to take on this kind of work. I can't think of the word I want. But any

rate, it, it, we have all these, you know, videos to watch and books to read before we become part. And one of them is, can you separate yourselves from people that you might tend to get close to? And I said, "Yes, I think I can do that."

Uh, I had a person who nobody else liked. Nobody could stand her. But because we had a common person — my sister Ann taught her in second grade and she was the one person in her life who she said was so good to her — well, then, we struck up a relationship. So when Mary Teresa died, that was hard because we became good friends.

And then another one, um, Loren. He was so funny. Um, I can't tell you, but he loved me to come down to his room and see his airplanes that he was building. He was in the service, and he was always building airplanes. And he was just a funny guy. And everybody loved Loren. So, when Loren died, we all had a story to talk about Loren.

And then there was, who was the third one? There was a third lady. I should remember her name. It began with a d. But I can't remember. But any rate, she loved to play cards. And she could beat me at these cards, and she loved it because it was a game where you had to remember what was on the pile underneath, you know, the top card. And she could remember what those cards were. And I said, "Not fair. I'm not playing with you any more." She said, "Aw, come on. Let's play another game." And of course we would. So, uh, you do get close to people.

And then others, uh, they don't let you get close to them. Uh, they're in their own world. Some have lots of family around them all the time. Others have no family. So, one tends to get close to the people that, um, don't have anybody or not very many people around. And then they love to see your day when you're back again, you know, look forward to your coming again. So, it's, it's, it's both, you know. Get close to them, hard

to see them go. Or get, get word on your, you know, um, e-mail, so-and-so died yesterday or this past week when you weren't here. And if they have a wake service or a memorial then I'll try to back there to the home for that.

13 Favorite Part of Being a Sister of Providence

Sister Marilyn, what is your favorite thing about being a Sister of Providence?

Well, I just love being who I am. Um, I, I just have become a Sister of Providence, you know? A novice asked me back — way back — why did you stay a Sister of Providence? And I said, "Oh, I can't not be a Sister of Providence [small laugh], that's who I am. And I like being it." And so, um, why do I like it? I love what we do, I like who we are, I like what we're about. You know, when, when I'm out in, let's say, the secular world where there's so much about money and making it and, and all the fluff and everything, it's like, oh, oh, that becomes so laborious. And then it's nice to go home to something simple. And so I guess the vowed life is a wonderful life once, once a person really lives that life and grows in that life. See that's the thing. If we ever stayed in 1952 it would be a tragedy. But because we all grow then, um, one [bells toll in the background] just grows with it. And I guess as parents grow with their children, so I grow, uh, with the Sisters of Providence, and we grow up as Sisters of Providence and become better people and more in touch with the world and more in touch with God and more in touch with all the creatures and all the people. And it's, it's just, um, it's just a good life.

14 Devotional Items

Are there devotional items that you use?

Well, in my room, I loved Sister Edith Pfau's [died 2001] picture of the Suffering Christ. I have that above my little bookshelf. Um, we, I first had that framed — they were selling them in the bookstore [The Gift Shop at Providence Center] for \$5 — so I, I got it and had it framed when I went to St. Andrew's and then it, when we moved away from that house and to other houses, I always kept that picture. And I love that picture because in the hand of Christ is a little figure, a little person, but it looks like an adult person. It's not like the, the hand in the Hand of God. It's, it's the Suffering Christ with this little person, or at least that's what I see. And I love that and that's myself in, in the hand of the Suffering Christ. So that picture's very special to me, uh, as a, as a devotional item.

Um, I love my crucifix. I have my chaplet hanging in my bedroom. Uh, I love to take it when I'm giving a talk on, on vocations or missions. I always love to take my chaplet with me. The kids love to see my chaplet, you know? And so, uh, I don't have a lot of ... oh, a candle. I'll burn a candle. I don't, I don't say the rosary much any more, but I, I love the Blessed Mother and I have our picture of Our Lady of Providence in my window in my bedroom. Uh, but somehow that kind of prayer, um, becomes laborious. I, I don't know why I'm saying that.

I, I like to meditate. I like to pray the Scriptures and when I pray the Scriptures — like my morning or evening prayer, um, especially my morning prayer because I do that by myself, the evening prayer we do as a community — but my morning prayer I just do those Psalms very slowly and I just think about whatever it is. So my, my Office Book is, is a very special to me. And I use the old one. Not that I like the sexist language, but I

love the fact that it has all the saints in it. Some of the newer books that we use are kind of hit and miss, you know, on the saints' feasts days and all. So, I more or less stay with that, but I have other readings that I use, like the readings for the Mass and that.

And, uh, I try to attend a noon mass every day. That's very important to me, um, to, to have a noon mass at one of the churches near us. And then as sisters of our house [Sister Marilyn resides at 2320 E. 91st Street, Indianapolis] we go to, uh, St. Pius X Saturday evening Mass as a, as a group of sisters there. And that community knows us as a community. So, that's, that's, no, it's not exactly a devotion but, you know, it's, it's one of the spiritual exercises.

So, my prayer is mainly, uh, you know the picture, the crucifix, my beads, uh, my Office, my Scriptures and meditation, um, my Mass, um, my time with my spiritual director — sometimes once a month, sometimes every two or three months. He's got a busy schedule. It is a priest who became, uh, close to us when we, the group of parish life coordinators, he became close to us then. That was kind of one of his jobs. We were one of his, um, you know, things he did, took care of. And so then I just kept him afterwards and it has worked well. So, I can't think of, um, anything else major.

15 Final Thoughts

Is there anything else you'd like to share with me before we conclude?

Only the one big thing that I am so grateful for and that is that every single thing I did in my life, as far as my ministry, whatever I did just before, prepared me for the next thing. Um, I was a teacher for 18 years and I got to study theology and I felt wonderful about my years as a formation director. And during those years I got to study some more theology at the college in my master's. And then I went from there I went into parish

ministry. And I felt ready. And I had a master's in, in, uh, education teaching, had a master's in theology. I was ready for the parish. And after 14 years as a director of religious ed and pastoral associate, I was ready to become a parish life coordinator and take on the parish myself.

And so now when I'm doing, um, uh, volunteer ministry, it's like, yeah, I can do that, yeah, I can do that. And I would enjoy doing that. And I would enjoy doing that. Now there's some things I would not enjoy doing, I'm sure, because I don't feel that my background has led me to that. But when I feel that my background has led me to that and I feel confident, then I do it. So, I don't know whether it's good, bad or indifferent, but that's, that is one of the things I have been extremely grateful for that one thing has led to another. And I have always then felt very good about my ministries and have loved them.

Sister Marilyn, thank you so much for your time.

You are welcome!

Interview and transcript completed by Connie McCammon